

Message Text

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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 265 - MARCH 3, 1977

1. LEBANON. SOUTHERN LEBANON CONTINUES TO BE THE PRINCIPAL PUBLIC PREOCCUPATION OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. THE PREDOMINANTLY CHRISTIAN FORCES ARE CURRENTLY ON THE OFFENSIVE IN THE SOUTH. THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THESE FORCES ARE UNITS FROM THE LEBANESE ARMY WHICH ARE COMPOSED OF LOCAL INHABITANTS. THEY HAVE RECENTLY BEEN REINFORCED BY SOME CHRISTIANS FROM MT. LEBANON, AND THE LOCAL PHALANGE AND SHAMOUNIST MILITIAS OPERATE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ARMY UNITS.

2. THE CHRISTIANS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS APPEAR DETERMINED TO DRIVE THE PALESTINIANS FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON. CHRISTIANS IN THE LEBANESE ARMY HAVE LONG WANTED TO RESTRICT PALESTINIAN ACTIVITIES AND RESTORE LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY THROUGHOUT LEBANON. THEY DO NOT SUPPORT

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COMMANDO RAIDS INTO ISRAEL, WHICH ONLY BRING REPRISALS ON LEBANESE VILLAGERS FROM THE ISRAELIS. THEY ARE NOT INTERESTED IN A RELIGIOUS WAR AND ARE ANXIOUS TO CONVINCE

THE LOCAL MUSLIMS TO JOIN IN THEIR STRUGGLE TO DRIVE OUT THE PALESTINIANS. ISRAELI SUPPORT IS ACCEPTED BECAUSE IT IS NEEDED.

3. THE CHRISTIANS GENERALLY DO NOT CONSIDER THE INTRODUCTION OF ASF FORCES INTO NABATIYA AND TYRE AS A SOLUTION TO THEIR PROBLEM, BECAUSE THE PALESTINIANS WILL STILL CONTROL ALL OF THE AREA WHICH IS NOW BEING CONTESTED. MOREOVER, THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THE SYRIANS WOULD CONTROL THE PALESTINIANS EVEN IF THEY COULD. THE CHRISTIANS AND THEIR ALLIES, THEREFORE, ARE LIKELY TO PRESS THEIR OFFENSIVE SO LONG AS THEY RECEIVE ISRAELI SUPPORT AND THE PALESTINIANS DO NOT PUT UP VERY STIFF RESISTANCE.

4. AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS ARE THE FEDAYEEN REJECTIONISTS AND LEFTIST LEBANESE. FATAH HAS REMAINED GENERALLY ON THE SIDELINES, BUT HAS OFFERED MATERIAL SUPPORT. A FEW INDIVIDUAL FATAH MEMBERS WHO HAVE ENTERED THE CONFLICT APPEAR TO HAVE GONE AGAINST THE INSTRUCTIONS OF FATAH COMMAND. (FATAH WAS DRAGGED INTO THE FIGHTING IN THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR IN THE LATE FALL OF 1975 IN A SIMILAR FASHION. WHEN INDIVIDUAL FIGHTERS JOINED THE CONFLICT, THE LEADERSHIP WAS FORCED TO SUPPORT THE STRUGGLE OR LOSE ITS CONSTITUENCY.,

5. THE PALESTINIANS ARE FIGHTING FOR THE LAST AREA IN WHICH THEY CAN FUNCTION AUTONOMOUSLY AND CAN OPERATE AGAINST ISRAEL. IF THEY LOSE SOUTHERN LEBANON TO THE CHRISTIANS, ISRAELIS, SYRIANS, THE UN, OR EVEN THE LOCAL MUSLIM POPULATION, THE PALESTINIANS WILL NO LONGER HAVE AN INDEPENDENT MILITARY BASE. MANY PALESTINIANS BELIEVE THAT IF THIS OCCURS THEY WILL LOSE THEIR ABILITY
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TO FORCE THE OTHER ARABS TO PROTECT EFFECTIVELY PALESTINIAN INTERESTS IN THE PEACE PROCESS.

6. TO PRESERVE THEIR INFLUENCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, THE PALESTINIANS MUST MAINTAIN THEIR TIES WITH THE LOCAL MUSLIM POPULATION. IT IS THEREFORE IN THE PALESTINIAN INTEREST TO DESCRIBE THE CONFLICT AS A MUSLIM/PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS AND ISRAELIS. THE CHRISTIANS, ON THE OTHER HAND, DESCRIBED THE CONFLICT AS LEBANESE AGAINST PALESTINIANS. EACH SIDE, THEREFORE, IS ATTEMPTING TO CONVINCE THE LEBANESE MUSLIMS OF SOUTHERN LEBANON THAT THEIR INTERESTS LIE WITH IT.

7. THE MUSLIMS OF SOUTHERN LEBANON FIND THEMSELVES BEING BRIBED, ENTICED, BEATEN AND SHELLS IN ORDER TO CONVINCE

THEM THAT THEY SHOULD SIDE WITH EITHER THE CHRISTIANS OR THE PALESTINIANS. IN RECENT WEEKS THE CHRISTIAN PERCEPTION OF LEBANESE VERSUS PALESTINIANS IS GAINING

SUPPORT. (SECRET)

8. ISRAEL. ISRAEL'S POLICY ON SOUTH LEBANON SEEMS TO BE DESIGNED TO PROTECT ITS PREROGATIVES AND EXPAND ITS INFLUENCE THERE. THE ISRAELIS UNDOUBTEDLY WISH TO SEE THE BORDER "BUFFER ZONE" COMPLETED AND THE MILITARY CONTROL OF THEIR CHRISTIAN ALLIES EXTENDED. TO THIS END, THEY APPARENTLY HAVE URGED THE CHRISTIANS TO CONTINUE THE OFFENSIVE AND HAVE PROVIDED ARTILLERY SUPPORT (ISRAELI ARTILLERY SPOTTERS ARE REPORTEDLY SERVING WITH FRONT-LINE CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN). CONCOMITANT WITH BACKING THE CHRISTIANS, THE ISRAELIS ARE APPARENTLY ATTEMPTING NOW TO WIN SUPPORT AMONG THE LOCAL MUSLIM POPULATION BY MAKING IT EASIER FOR THEM TO CROSS INTO ISRAEL THROUGH THE "GOOD FENCE" FOR MEDICAL HELP, WORK, AND SHOPPING.

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9. THE ISRAELIS SEEM TO VIEW THEIR CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE, GROWING INFLUENCE, AND A COMPLETED BUFFER ZONE AS THE BEST MEANS TO PROTECT THEIR SECURITY INTERESTS AND LIMIT PALESTINIAN FREEDOM OF MANEUVERABILITY IN SOUTH LEBANON. THEY HAVE OPPOSED THE USE OF ASF TROOPS ON THE GROUNDS THAT THIS WOULD THREATEN THEIR NORTHERN BORDER, BUT MOST PROBABLY ALSO BECAUSE THIS WOULD LIMIT THEIR MILITARY PREROGATIVES AND CURTAIL THEIR EFFORTS TO GAIN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE THERE. MOREOVER, THEY REALIZE THAT THE STATIONING OF ASF UNITS IN TYRE AND NABATIYA WOULD NOT NECESSARILY END THE FIGHTING AND WOULD RESULT IN A CALL FOR THE USE OF THE ASF EVEN FURTHER SOUTH, FOR THE ONLY WAY TO CONTROL PALESTINIAN ACTIVITY ON THE BORDER IS TO BE ON THE BORDER. THE ISRAELIS DO NOT BELIEVE THE SYRIANS WILL CONTROL FEDAYEEN ACTIVITY FOR THEY APPEAR TO HAVE FACILITATED THE MOVEMENT OF FEDAYEEN FROM BEIRUT TO THE SOUTH.

10. PERES' RECENT STATEMENT THAT A LEBANESE FORCE IS PREFERABLE TO UN TROOPS IS AN INDICATION THAT ISRAEL IS ALSO NOT READY TO SEE A UN FORCE IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHICH WOULD COUNTER THEIR DESIRE TO PRESERVE THEIR MILITARY OPTIONS (ANY USE OF MILITARY FORCE TO CONTROL THE PALESTINIANS IN A UN-CONTROLLED AREA WOULD BRING INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNATION,. THEIR ALLIANCE WITH THE CHRISTIANS AND EFFORTS TO WIN OVER THE LOCAL POPULATION OF ALL RELIGIOUS PERSUASIONS WOULD ALSO SUFFER.

11. EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTED THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBLE MAJOR STRIKES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, PROMISED ON FEBRUARY 27 TO GIVE WAGE INCREASES TO

MOST PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES SIMILAR TO THOSE ENGINEERS AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES HAD RECENTLY RECEIVED. THE GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO MINIMIZE CONCERN OVER THE POTENTIAL INFLATIONARY IMPACT OF THESE CONCESSIONS, BUT ISRAELI LEADERS HAVE PRIVATELY CONCEDED THAT THE IMPACT

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WILL BE SUBSTANTIAL. ONE IMMEDIATE RESULT WAS THE COLLAPSE OF WAGE-PRICE CONTROL LEGISLATION PENDING IN THE KNESSET.

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12. AN ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL INFORMED EMBASSY TEL AVIV THAT THE PROPOSED VISIT OF FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER GUIRINGAUD HAS NOW BEEN SET FOR LATE MARCH, ALTHOUGH THE EXACT DATE IS YET TO BE DETERMINED. RABIN HAS AGREED TO PAY AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO FRANCE LATER THIS YEAR. THE OFFICIAL SAID ISRAEL WAS DOING ITS UTMOST TO NORMALIZE FRANCO-ISRAELI RELATIONS. HE ADDED THAT ISRAEL FELT FRENCH MIDEAST POLICY HAS SOMEWHAT IMPROVED IN RECENT WEEKS AND NOW SEEMS MORE CLOSELY ALIGNED WITH THAT OF OTHER EUROPEAN STATES. ONE REASON FOR THE SMALL SHIFT, IN HIS VIEW, WAS THE POTENTIAL JEWISH VOTE IN THE UPCOMING FRENCH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. (SECRET)

13. PLO. EMBASSY CAIRO HAS NOTED THAT, IN A FEBRUARY 28 PRESS CONFERENCE WITH ASAD, SADAT STATED THAT HIS CONCEPT OF A PRE-GENEVA JORDAN-PLO LINK HAD BEEN DISCUSSED WITH ASAD PRIOR TO HIS MAKING IT PUBLIC. SADAT ADDED THAT "WE HAVE REACHED AN UNDERSTANDING WITH SYRIA" ON THE MATTER. WE HAVE BEEN AWARE THAT SYRIA ALSO FAVORS A JORDAN-PLO LINK, BUT THIS IS THE FIRST INDICATION THAT ASAD NOW BELIEVES THAT THIS SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED PRIOR TO GENEVA. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

14. AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT. AT THE FIRST AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT OPENING MARCH 7 IN CAIRO--AND AT A THREE-DAY MINISTERIAL MEETING PRECEDING IT--THE ARABS WILL SEEK MORE AFRICAN SUPPORT ON MIDDLE EAST POLICY ISSUES, WHILE THE AFRICANS WILL SEEK INCREASED ARAB ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. PROSPECTS FOR REACHING AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION ARE DIM.

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15. BLACK AFRICAN NATIONS WILL REPORTEDLY ASK FOR SOME

\$400 MILLION ANNUALLY IN MULTILATERAL CONCESSIONAL BALANCE-
OF-PAYMENTS SUPPORT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. THAT MAG-
NITUDE OF NEW ASSISTANCE WOULD INCREASE TOTAL ARAB BALANCE-

OF PAYMENTS AID TO BLACK AFRICA BY NEARLY 50 PERCENT
AND WOULD OFFSET ABOUT THREE-FOURTHS OF THE NET OIL IMPORT
BILL OF THE AFRICAN STATES NOT BELONGING TO OPEC.

16. IN THE ABSENCE OF AN ARAB COMMITMENT TO UNDERTAKE
GREATER AID AND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS IN BLACK AFRICA, THE
AFRICANS MAY WELL WITHHOLD THEIR SUPPORT ON POLITICAL
ISSUES TO SHOW THEIR DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE PARSIMONY
OF ARAB OIL PRODUCERS AND DEMONSTRATE THAT SUPPORT FOR
ARAB POSITIONS CAN NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED AUTOMATIC.

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